

Drug Testing; The Critical Elements

There are five critical elements to a successful drug-testing program:

- Random, unannounced urinalysis;
- Testing smaller numbers more often during the month vice one or two test days;
- Mandatory for all personnel;
- Personnel selected are held in secured area until they provide a sample;
- Khaki presence and involvement in collection and observation.

If any one of these five critical elements is not in place, then a command's drug testing program is subject to compromise by drug users.

For more information on how to establish and maintain a successful drug testing program contact any of the following individuals:

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1. Random urinalysis must be unpredictable and unannounced.

Use of Navy Drug Screening Program (NDSP), the computer software program that randomly selects testing days and personnel to be tested is mandated by the Department of Defense. To be effective, commands must check NDSP each day to see if it will be a testing day. When Urinalysis Program Coordinators (UPCs) do not check NDSP daily the potential for patterns is present and drug users can and will identify and exploit those patterns by planning drug use around any identifiable pattern. This is called "gaming" the system.

2. Test multiple times during the month.

Testing multiple times during the month enhances the deterrent effect of a command's drug testing program. When commands test once or twice a month it provides individuals with the opportunity to identify testing patterns and when that happens the potential for those individuals to exploit the command's drug testing exists.

3. Direct Observation is required.

Direct observation requires an observer of the same gender watch the urine leave the body and enter the bottle. The observer should never lose sight of the bottle and should never take possession of the bottle. Many NCIS interviews have identified that many commands have very sound drug testing programs, testing 40% monthly with multiple collections during the month but they did not have direct observation. There are many products available via the Internet that will allow an individual to defeat a drug test by substituting their own urine with clean urine. The only way to detect such measures is with sound direct observation.

4. **Personnel selected are maintained in secured area until sample is provided.**

One of the methods employed by drug users to avoid detection is to show up at the end of a day after ingesting large volumes of fluids and voiding a number of times. This is often done after taking a diuretic that accelerates the Basal Metabolism Rate. Individuals who employ this tactic have learned that they can saturate one's system and provide a diluted sample at the end of a day that otherwise may have tested positive if provided in the morning. Holding personnel in a secured area under watch until a sample is provided is a safeguard against drug users exploiting a command's drug testing program.

5. **Personnel selected cannot be excused from drug testing.**

Establish a command policy that mandates all personnel selected for urinalysis will report to a specified area within a period of time after notification and remain until a sample is provided. One method drug users are using to avoid detection is to get excused from providing a sample after being notified of the requirement. Interviews with NCIS have identified Sailors using many different excuses (e.g. family problems, feeling sick, simply disappearing from command, not being able to void, emergent tasking at work etc. etc. etc) to avoid having to provide a sample.

6. **Use Khaki Personnel as Observers.**

Use of Khaki personnel as observers virtually eliminates any attempts by drug users to avoid detection. Have leadership monitor observers during urinalysis collection.

7. **Executive Officer Reports.**

NDSP has capability to provide XO reports on such items as personnel selected but not tested, roster modifications, monthly percentages, validation of UPC and observers in command NDSP roster, days NDSP not checked and many more. Have your UPC provide the XO a monthly report of all the aforementioned reports to use as a monitoring of the command's drug testing program.

8. **Conduct weekend and Duty Section Drug Testing.**

Many commands limit their drug testing to Monday through Fridays. Including Weekend and duty Section testing will enhance your deterrent effect and help eliminate any attempts by individuals to game your command's drug testing program.

9. **Train your Observers.**

Train your command observers and have them sign a brief sheet each time they are required to be an observer. Take the time to impress upon each observer the command's expectation and their responsibilities. Have command leadership monitor the observers.

10. **Urinalysis is Mission Readiness not Administrative Burden.**

All command personnel must understand that drug testing is a mission readiness issue and when they are called to provide a sample, act as observers, or assist in any way, they must do so with the utmost professionalism.

11. **Placing Labels on Bottles**

It is recommended UPCs place bottle labels on bottles prior to members departing for head to provide specimen. This eliminates the potential for members to switch bottles once out of sight of UPC and while distracting observers. In cases where UPCs do not place labels on bottles prior to member providing urine it is recommended UPCs, using a marking pen and unknown to members, place a mark on the bottle prior to member providing urine. UPCs can then verify the bottle a member returns is the original bottle the member was provided.